IV

LITERATURE AND NATIONAL DESTINY IN RUSSIA

I

RUSSIA is a vast borderland across which Europe and Asia have looked distantly at each other. Though distant and alien, Europe and Asia have clashed in the Russian soul, and Russia's history has been an ever unsettled choice of the continent to which she was to belong. When Christianity came to pagan Russia, in the tenth century, its orthodoxy had the vesture of Byzantine law and Byzantine autocracy. Then floods of Asiatic invasion swept over the Russian land and so saturated it that forever, it seemed, one had only to scratch a Cossack to find a Tartar. In the days of the Renaissance Russia gradually broke the shackles, but not the spirit, of Mongol rule. Gone were the days of the old commonwealths of Pskov and Kiev; gone was the liberty of Novgorod, "to choose her ruler wherever she liked." Autocracy had been established in golden-headed Moscow, patterned on the Golden Horde and on the Golden Horn.

Peter the Great wrenched Russia from Moscow and launched her at St. Petersburg, his new capital, on the seas of Western civilization. Muscovy was to be reformed on European patterns; yet in its new framework Muscovite autocracy was to retain and to increase its power. Once opened, however, Peter's gates admitted all sorts of European wares: bureaucracy and industry, Western culture and

luxury, of course, but also the restless spirit of the West, a radical spirit, committed to freedom and liberal institutions, a spirit of reform and revolt. And that spirit of revolt found response in the Russian soul. Western literature and Western art, modern science and philosophy: to the Russian all these were avenues to freedom; they alienated many of the educated classes from the Tsarist orthodox autocracy. The peasantry, chafing under bureaucratic oppression, was also suspicious of these new alien gospels. It persisted in trusting the orthodox Tsar; but in calling him "Little Father" it expressed its faith and also the terms of it. When the Russian masses finally lost confidence in the Little Father, the imperial régime had to go.

This kind of summary of Russian history, in two paragraphs, would be a plain impertinence, were it not needed as a broad background for our topic. The topic itself is broad enough, and I should state clearly at the outset that I have no intention of presenting here an hour's abstract of Russian literature. I shall undertake rather to consider some outstanding works of Russian literary genius as contending judgments of Russia's national problems and visions of Russia's destiny. Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life applies with especial significance to Russian literature. Russia's great writers have been critics of life and of Russian life. Their poems and novels and dramas are abiding documents of the self-searching and the aspiration of the Russian national soul. This angle of interpretation is the choice of our short essay, and it also defines its limits.

If Asia and Europe, East and West, have been the two contending forces in Russia's orientation, political and national ideals themselves have contended and also fused in the Russian soul with the spirit of Christianity. In no other land has the expression "orthodoxy" had this distinctively

patriotic significance, as pre-eminently Russian. It is not a matter of accident that the Russian peasant was called "krestianin," or the Russian ruler, "the orthodox Tsar," or the country itself "Holy Russia." We may see how these two ideals and motives, the national and the Christian, fusing to yield the meaning of Russia, have sometimes sustained and sometimes also resisted each other. Russian autocracy sought and secured the backing of Russian Christian orthodoxy. Western culture and liberalism, suspected of their unorthodox leanings, were strongly resisted by the votaries of Holy Russia. Contrariwise, the leaders of the Revolution set out to achieve freedom for the Russian people by sweeping out throne and altar together. We have to keep in mind these facts and ideas, if we are to understand Russian literature.

So we find, characteristically, the first two works of note in Russian literature. One of them is the Christian *Gospel of Ostromir,* dating from the eleventh century. The other, perhaps a century later, is the *Lay of Igor's Armament,* the popular epic of Russian struggles with alien unchristian foes (Borodin used it in his music-drama, *Prince Igor*). Notice how early the Christian and the Russian *motifs* are blended in literary portrayal: in the scourging of all manner of infidel enemies and, to cite only one early example, in Nestor's chronicle of the death of St. Olga: "She beamed on Christendom like the morning star. . . . She shed over it a gentle dawn. Amidst the infidels she shone like the moon in the darkness. . . . Now she has risen before us to the Russian heaven, where, worshiped by the sons of Russia, she prays God on their behalf."

Peter the Great's European reforms were followed by steadily expanding Western influences in Russia during the eighteenth century. The leaders of the French Enlighten-

ment had especial foreign prestige during this period; they received abroad the welcome which was often denied them at home. As Voltaire was a guest of Friedrich the Second at Sans Souci, so Diderot was favorite adviser of Catherine the Second in St. Petersburg. But the French radicals went deeper and much farther than their royal patrons were prepared to go. When the storm of the Revolution burst in France, Catherine was terrified; Voltaire's bust was speedily removed from her imperial desk; the Western liberals were banished, and Russians were told to stay at home and watch their step. High society quickly changed its tune; church orthodoxy chimed in renewed admonition. But the Western spirit was not changed by imperial order or ecclesiastic anathema, nor by imprisonment and exile to Siberia. Even in the palace the issue was sharply drawn. Tsar Alexander the First was a pupil of La Harpe, dreamed liberal dreams for Russia and meant to support the reform-policy of his minister Speransky. But the conservative forces of Holy Russia prevailed, and Alexander changed his course. His successor, Nicholas I, became the unyielding champion of reactionary and autocratic régime, not only in Russia but throughout Europe. The next Tsar, Alexander II, undertook drastic reforms, emancipated the peasant serfs, fought a war of liberation in the Balkans. But with his successor, Alexander III, the conservative reaction once again prevailed. Thus growing in intensity, the Russian struggle was pressing for decision, and it is enough to note that the next Tsar, Nicholas II, was also the last.

When we keep in mind that Russian literature was for the most part the achievement of the nineteenth century, of this period of national unsettlement and clashing issues, we can understand better its substance and its spirit. We should not confuse the Russian authors with the political or social par-

tisans, but neither should we separate them too sharply. Writing in an epoch of unrest and struggle, the Russian masters portrayed and interpreted Russian life, probed its issues and problems, uttered its ideal aspirations.

Literature was itself a social-political power in Russia, which the imperial government recognized and sought to direct or control, not only by strict censorship but also by stern discipline of writers, even of the greatest. The letters of Russian authors are rife with complaints of the censor's mutilation of their works. Yet even the toned down versions retained their stirring power, while in their original statement, published abroad or posthumously, we get the tragic effect of their full intensity. The great poet Pushkin, while a youth of only nineteen, was dreaming of the bright day of freedom:

> Russia will rouse from her long sleep;
> And, where autocracy lies, broken,
> Our names shall yet be graven deep.

Nine years later he sends his "Message" to Siberian exiles:

> Deep in the Siberian mine,
> Keep your patience proud;
> The bitter toil shall not be lost,
> The rebel thought unbowed.

Pushkin's great significance in Russian literature will receive further notice presently. His death, in a duel, cut short his career when he was at the height of his powers. The same tragic blow ended the life of Michael Lermontov, a brilliant romantic poet on whom Pushkin's mantle seemed to have fallen. But a greater master than Lermontov had already risen in the Ukraine and was setting the tradition of Russian literary realism: Nikolai Gogol. In his *Taras Bulba* Gogol recreated the burly days of the Dnieper Cossacks. His comedy, *The Inspector,* portrayed the corruption and the stupidity of the petty officialdom with such conta-

gious humor that, as it is reported, the Tsar himself led in the uproarious laughter which shook the theater. But there was ominous irony in the laughter, and it is even more powerfully felt in Gogol's masterpiece, *Dead Souls*. The plot of this novel has the simplicity of genius. As was familiar to every Russian reader, the peasant serfs or "souls" on the large landed estates were so much taxable property. Gogol's chief character (we certainly cannot call him a hero), Tchitchikov, conceives the scheme of acquiring for little or no money the legal title to a number of serfs who have died but whose names remain on the government tax-rolls until the next census. He would use this humbug estate of "dead souls" as security for a large bank loan. This crooked enterprise sends him all over Russia, and we are given a portrait gallery of landowner types. Gogol's treatment of this theme is convulsingly comical in detail, but the total effect of the novel was expressed by Pushkin: "What a dreary country is our Russia!" And Gogol himself felt overpowered as he viewed the immense groping confusion of his native land.

II

As the problem of Russia's national destiny became more sharply defined, so the main alternatives were more emphatically expressed and championed. Basically the issue was between orthodox conservatism and critical liberalism. More explicitly, however, the avowed struggle was between the defenders of the old Russian-Slavic spirit and the advocates of reforms along Western lines. In exploring these issues we can reach the heights and the depths of Russian literature, for here we find opposed to each other Fyodor Dostoyevsky, one of the keenest analysts of the human soul that ever lived, and Ivan Turgenev, whom the critic Taine called "the finest artist since Sophocles."

Turgenev was by training and temperament and reasoned conviction a *Zapadnik,* an advocate of Western ideals for Russia. He saw only one way of salvation for Russia or for any other country: the way of civilization, of enlightenment and culture. Any other gospel of alleged perfection seemed to him mere bigotry. Before Russia can become a full member of the family of nations, she must face the unpleasant truth, see herself as she is and honestly undertake her own reformation. Why be proud of our deficiencies? So we read in Turgenev's novel *Smoke:* "Nothing to compare with us, indeed! Our bristles . . . are large, because our pigs are poor; our hides are stout and thick, because our cows are thin; our tallow is rich, because it is boiled down with half the flesh!" The Russian's estimate of himself is apt to be equally perverse. He mistakes his aimless dilettantism for cultural vitality and creative power, his dreaming and his futile emotion for idealism and high purpose. Turgenev portrayed the Russian's moral instability and sterility, his ceaseless yearning and his lack of resolution, his superficial interest in all things and mastery of none: ignorant, superstitious, inefficient, unreliable.

These vices in the Russian character were exposed the more effectively because Turgenev as a true artist perceived and portrayed living persons, with all their other qualities to engage the reader's understanding and sympathies. Here were the simple peasants and their masters, some of them hard, others kindly, in the *Sportsman's Sketches;* here are some fine brave men, or more often women: Elena in *On the Eve,* Natalia in *Rudin,* Marianna in *Virgin Soil.* But the more usual round of characters is far different: Rudin himself and Lavretzky, Gagin, Litvinov, Nezhdanov: so many versions of the inconclusive yearning and Hamlet-like final futility of Russia as Turgenev saw it.

So this was Russia's need: the severe discipline of thorough mastery, enlightenment, civilization, moral resolution. And this was Russia's right, too, the right of emancipation, not only of the serfs but of all men from all oppression, freedom for all in work and speech and thought and faith, the freedom which only truth and the whole truth yields. Here was a critic of Russia in whose work Russian literary art had reached its summit, himself by his liberalism, his critical insight, his creative genius sustaining the deep faith required for the far-reaching reforms which he advocated.

In sharp opposition to all this liberalism and civilization on Western lines, were the Slavophiles with their worship of Holy Russia. Though in the main conservatives in their political-social outlook, the Slavophiles were not all reactionaries or obscurantists. Some of them were in their own way liberals; in criticizing the bureaucratic Tsarist government, they declared that it had been built on foreign, German models, contrary to native Russian institutions. But for the most part they did tend towards a reactionary position. In politics they opposed any surrender of established authority; in religion they championed unqualified orthodoxy and ecclesiastic tradition; they frowned on any broadly humanitarian ideas or projects, and advocated the primacy of Russian or Panslavic principles.

Whether mildly liberal or firmly reactionary, the Slavophiles condemned all Western leanings in Russia. Russia might learn some modern technical skills from Europe, but no basic truths of thought or of living. On the contrary, it is Slavic Russia, Holy Orthodox Russia that has the saving truth. Why should Russians pursue wisdom abroad? Let them seek it and find it where it is, in the heart of their own Russian tradition. It was this ideal of national destiny that Fyodor Dostoyevsky preached. There was tragic irony here.

In his youth Dostoyevsky had engaged in revolutionary activity, had been imprisoned, condemned to death and just before his execution heard his sentence changed to exile in Siberia. Yet all these hard years in the clutches of Holy Russia only confirmed his faith in her essential soundness. He rejected all modern radicalism, with its trust in reforming society by means of new systems or agencies economic or political. What mankind needs is the right Christian spirit, Russia's traditional possession. Regain this true Russian faith, build on it alone, and avoid all modern agitators as you would the plague. Dostoyevsky was thus one with the Slavophiles in opposing the Western liberals. But it would be a mistake to regard him as a Slavophile or Panslavist. His conviction was really Panrussian-Christian. Berdyaev has recently called him "specifically Russian, Russian right through, the most Russian of all Russian writers: and at the same time he was the most human." The last phrase is the most important here, for it expresses both Dostoyevsky's faith in Russia and his gospel to Russia.

The full meaning of this ideal determines his active stand throughout, alike in his resistance and in his advocacy. What he resisted most of all was the nihilist spirit that denied not only faith in Russia but all faith whatever. Now, as it happened, Turgenev had also portrayed the Russian nihilist, in his novel *Fathers and Sons,* one of the most famous of Russian books. But Dostoyevsky was not content with portrayal; he undertook, especially in his novel *The Possessed* (*The Demons*), to combat and to destroy this nihilism, for in it he saw the ruin of Russia and of mankind. A comparison of these two novels not only reveals the different art of these two masters but also their different approach to human life.

Russian nihilism was not a philosophy of negation pure and simple. It set negation first because on all sides in Rus-

sia it saw barriers to men's and women's untrammeled freedom: traditions and superstitions and scruples and standards, all requiring a sweeping denial. In Russia religion was the bulwark of autocracy; and the aesthetic gentlefolk found their cult of beauty easily compatible with their ugly oppression of the dirty peasants. The nihilists therefore challenged religious dogmatism, aestheticism, capitalism, autocracy. They would crush all the citadels of oppressive authority, all institutions wherein the ruling classes stood entrenched; and upon the ruins of oppression they would see the new world arise, a world without institutional shackles, unbound and free.

Already in 1861 Turgenev's penetrating vision had perceived the coming of this new type in Russia. Here was indeed a tragic perversion of the spirit of liberal reform which he advocated. The nihilist rejected the sound together with the unsound; he rejected it all. Turgenev's nihilist Bazarov is not content to combat oppression and exploitation and special privilege and religious bigotry and dishonesty or pretense in art and science, corrupt family life, misdirected education. These are not enough for Bazarov: he rejects the very basis of human dignity and worth, on which any sound reform of these evils could be carried out. He would not reform and perfect family life; he negates it outright, and along with family loyalty all other principles of devotion. Most pathetic in Turgenev's novel is the attachment of Bazarov's parents to their learned son, whom they both adore and fear. But all their trembling concern to please their boy is unavailing. Bazarov has no time for such outworn traditions as filial affection; he is weary of the two old fogeys; the visit to which they had looked forward for years is snapped short after the second day.

Turgenev portrayed this spirit of utter denial, but por-

trayed also the society in which so much did require denial or reform. So his book roused a storm of criticism from all sides, displeasing both conservatives and radicals in its realistic unpartisan justice to all parties. But Dostoyevsky, in *The Possessed,* had no thought of critical balance. He was dealing with a plague and was uncompromising. In the new movement of denial he saw corrosive unbelief, perverted views of life, unprincipled brute power, cruelty and malicious joy in destruction and evil. These nihilists are ready to use anyone in any way that serves their purpose. They would deceive and oppress those whom they have lured to join their movement, would attach them hopelessly to themselves by staining their hands in bloody conspiracies, but also would abandon them helpless in a lurch or even destroy them without a qualm as may suit their purpose. These are satanic men: what ultimate good could ever be expected of them when their whole thought was bent on evil and destruction, without scruple, without conscience, without a hint of regret? These men live on hate; they require a world which they can hate. Were perfection to be realized even according to their own formulas, they would turn against it with double perverse malice. All this and more is in Dostoyevsky's harrowing book, and we in our day can testify how deeply prophetic he was in unveiling the human capacities for destructive cruelty: for has not the evil strain in our contemporary life been called the revolution of nihilism?

The sharp difference between Dostoyevsky and Turgenev can be seen more clearly now. Turgenev condemned the nihilist's lack of critical discrimination and constructive spirit. A sound policy of reform, he thought, requires the opposition to certain practices and institutions, and therefore also the firm support of certain other institutions and social agencies. The nihilists might destroy the evils in our

social system, but also the good with the evil, and produce only ruin and chaos. Unlike Turgenev, Dostoyevsky condemned the critical liberal along with the nihilist. This precisely was the root of evil in human life, according to Dostoyevsky: the critical rebellious spirit of self-will, resistant to the trusting submission which is the essence of faith. This is the infidelity which parades as critical judgment, the scientific spirit, modernism, which has poisoned Western civilization and threatens its ruin. Liberals and nihilists are both in need of repentance and faith. The world cannot be saved by men's devisings, by new systems and policies: be these liberal constitutions or democracies or socialisms or scientific and technical methods or any other externalities. Modern mechanical minds put their trust in such devices, and their trust is vain. What mankind, and what more particularly Russia needs is a new spirit, or better a living renewal of the old true spirit of Christian faith and love: not hatred and strife of social groups that could at best lead only to some compromise and truce, but the welding power and union of brotherly love which alone can redeem us all and achieve Christian concord and abiding peace.

This is the true Christian word to our modern world, according to Dostoyevsky, and this has been the true destiny of Russia, to speak this word to mankind. His advocacy of it may be read in all his works, but he gave it an emphatic utterance in his memorable speech celebrating the centenary of the birth of Pushkin. What makes Pushkin the great national poet of Russia, according to Dostoyevsky, is this: he embodied and expressed the Russian spirit of all-human understanding and appeal. Pushkin probed and diagnosed the root of Russia's modern evil: in that disturbed unsatisfied spirit of men who cannot believe in their own country nor in its powers, whose sense of sympathy and co-operation has

been dulled and whose moral resolution is null. But Pushkin also gave us "artistic types of Russian moral beauty, which had sprung directly out of the Russian soul, which had its home in the truth of the people, in our very soil." Pushkin revealed his all-human perception and sympathy, a peculiarly Russian quality, so Dostoyevsky believed, which Pushkin possessed to perfection: the genius to enter and express the spirit of other nations, a universally all-human insight and utterance. His is the native speech of Russia, but in that speech he speaks the words of all men. Therein is his great significance, that he reveals the universal spiritual power and mission of the Russian people.

Now let us see clearly what is the important thing here. Critical students of Pushkin may agree or disagree with Dostoyevsky's interpretation of the great poet. What most matters here is Dostoyevsky's advocacy of this ideal of national destiny, not its adequate or inadequate application to Alexander Pushkin. Dostoyevsky in effect declares that the true destiny of his country is not in her achievement of any external dominion, or in modern superiority and mastery, but in this above all: in her possession of the love and faith of Christ wherein the brotherhood of all mankind is to be realized. So he writes: "Perhaps our poor country will at the end say the new word to the world. . . . Our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite mankind." Dostoyevsky was convinced that by the grace of God the Russian people had this quality of spirit in a pre-eminent degree. "The supreme, the most characteristic feature of our people," he wrote, "is its instinct, its hunger for rectitude. . . . In Russia love rules—we believe in love as a mysterious power, which can at a blow shatter every barrier, and establish a new life." The poet Tiutchev said: "One

cannot understand Russia with one's reason. One can only have faith in Russia." So Dostoyevsky exalted, above the learning and the technical skill of Western Europe, the deep faith and the inner enlightenment of Russia. "To be a true Russian does indeed mean to aspire finally to reconcile the contradictions of Europe, . . . to include within our soul by brotherly love all our brethren, and at last, it may be, to pronounce the final Word of the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations, in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ!"

This sort of writing has been called "religious populism." Is Russia really the Messiah of modern nations, as Dostoyevsky has portrayed her? We might doubt it, and in our criticism cite chapter and verse from Dostoyevsky's own works, to show the hundred vices of the Russian people, which he has probed with uncanny insight. But such criticisms do not touch the main point, which is one of ideal valuation. May I repeat?—Dostoyevsky may be mistaken about Pushkin; he may be mistaken in his estimate of the Russian spirit. But the challenge still remains, of his ideal aspiration for his people and for all mankind. I might here venture a comparison between Dostoyevsky's religious populism and the democratic faith of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson knew very well the woeful shortcomings of the common people, and of the uncommon, too. He did not have an easy trust in men, but he did have a sublime faith for man, for what he might be and should be and shall yet become. That is the heart and the promise of Jefferson's democracy. So Dostoyevsky had a great faith for Russia, and in expressing this faith he gave us his version of the Christian gospel, in which and by which alone Russia and the world are to be saved. So although Dostoyevsky's piety and idolatry of Holy Russia might seem odd and strange to a Western

reader, his ideal hope for Russia is another matter. He points to a sublime principle in all human life, and who is in a better position to grasp its tragic importance than precisely we ourselves in these days of world-shattering war and seemingly hopeless chaos that is sweeping over us? Dostoyevsky compels us to face our crucial question today: Is it or is it not true that the spirit of Christian love is the only possible cure of our world's distemper? And is not the full possession of this spirit of love and all-human fellowship the true ideal of national destiny, whether for Russia or for America or for any other people?

III

We now come to the last of the three great masters of Russian literature, Lyof Tolstoy. The right estimate of Tolstoy's views on patriotic devotion and national destiny is not easy. In his own way he is as difficult a Russian to understand as Dostoyevsky. If we were content to compare both of them with Turgenev, their general unity of tone in their resistance to modern-Western civilization might lead us to overlook some basic principles on which they, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, differ radically. I shall venture to state the issues between them sharply, and then turn to Tolstoy's views more particularly. Dostoyevsky puts all his trust in Russian-Christian faith and love: that is the height of his conception. But in practical policy he also champions the traditional Russian structure of orthodoxy and authority, because Christian faith and love to him mean and require individual submission and the curbing of self-will. Tolstoy's gospel is also one of Christian love, but Christian love, as Tolstoy understands it, dissolves the shackles of institutional régime; it achieves a life of free devotion and fellowship, not of rigid orthodoxy or authority.

In speaking of Tolstoy's gospel, we have in mind mainly the apostolate of his later years. But we must remember that vast and various career of achievement during his more than fourscore years. It was late in life that Tolstoy attained his full conviction of the basic worth and meaning of human existence; but he had been in search of it all his years. He sought it in the transports of passion, in the vast calm of elemental nature, in the daredevil intoxication of ever-present death and in the hardening of the soul through war, in the serene joys of a happy family life, in the glowing sense of ever-expanding fame, power of wealth, social prestige: ever insatiate and never satisfied. When he had seemingly scaled the heights of worldly ambition, he recoiled from life. The height on which he stood was the brink of an abyss.

His span of ideas is as widespreading as his range of exploits. His early social reaction reflected the influence of Rousseau. He turned away from the artificialities of civilized society, in which he felt himself entwined with a hundred bonds which he could not break, to seek fullness of living in the wild freedom of nature, in the Caucasus. This attitude is expressed in his novel *The Cossacks*. But while the Cossack or the Caucasian horsemen had no artificiality, they had no art either; they lacked both science and conscience. Even in the midst of wild nature, Tolstoy still had his problems. Neither his own destiny nor Russia's could be realized in the Caucasus. Meanwhile the Crimean War swept him into the tumults of battle, especially in the siege of Sevastopol. Tolstoy portrayed war, not mystically from above, nor romantically from afar, nor terribly from below, but truly from within: the day by day and hour by hour dispute of life with death.

Already in these Sevastopol sketches which confirmed his literary fame, Tolstoy was preparing his art for its greater

utterance, in his master-work on a national theme, *War and Peace*. This novel is world-famous, and our days have made it again freshly familiar to us all. It is only its note of national outlook that I can mention here. In this literary immensity, with its score of intertwined human dramas, we have more than a canvas or chronicle of Russia and Europe in the Napoleonic era. Behind or right through the imposing array of princes and aristocrats, generals and commanders, Napoleon and Kutuzov, are the rank and file that really count and decide the final issues of history. *War and Peace* is an epic of the people of Russia, and also of the Russian land without limits which Napoleon invaded and in which he was engulfed and lost and destroyed.

During the long years in which he was achieving *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina,* Tolstoy was moving with growing tension towards the great crisis of his life. The struggles which he had portrayed in some of his characters reflected his own tragic conflict. For all his world-wide fame and recognition, Tolstoy could not recognize anything of lasting worth in his career, could not justify his own existence, and contemplated suicide. Seeking light from somewhere, he turned to religion, to the simple Christian faith of the Russian peasants. And he found in the Gospels the outline of a way of life which solved his tragic problems. He chose the Gospel for himself and proclaimed it to Russia and to the world. Five principles especially he found in the Sermon on the Mount: condemning murderous anger and scorn, sensuality, the surrender of a man's free conscience by official oaths of unquestioning obedience, national and racial prejudices and barriers, and the use of force in violent compulsion and revenge. Tolstoy interpreted all this teaching as the rejection of exploitation and oppression and institutional shackles: the liberation of man's soul in faith

and fellowship, in common daily work, mutual respect, love and joy in plain Christian living.

We cannot trace all the results of this radical conversion in the closing acts of Tolstoy's own life-drama. With astonishing boldness he undertook to translate the Gospel into a daily program of life. What interests us here is the application of his Christian faith to problems of nationality, patriotism, and social-political order. Tolstoy rejects the rule of force on which, as he believes, most political and institutional structures rest. This does not mean only the repudiation of capital punishment, but of all violent compulsion whatever. By force you can cow the criminal or overwhelm the wrong-doer, but you can make him turn from evil to good in one way only, and that is the way of Christian love. This is Tolstoy's doctrine of non-resistance, and he applied it to private human relations, to the treatment of crime, and to war. Revenge and prisons and gallows and battlefields accomplish nothing good, so he declared. Christian love is the only cure and sovereign remedy for the ills of mankind. His opposition to war is unqualified. War is essentially evil and brutal. No weak palliatives of international laws or rules or treaties can cover up its ugly reality or mend its horrors. If you would cure this evil, go down to its root. So he had written earlier in his life, in the days of the siege of Sevastopol: "It is not the suffering and mutilation and death of man's body that most needs to be diminished—but it is the mutilation and death of his soul. Not the *Red* Cross is needed, but the simple cross of Christ to destroy falsehood and deception."

But opposition to war is not enough. We must remove the conditions in human life which breed war. Otherwise individuals and nations without definite plans of aggression may find themselves involved in bloody strife. Men should

remain true and loyal to their own Christian conscience, against any social or institutional oaths of unquestioning obedience and against any notions of national exclusiveness or partisanship. Tolstoy proposes such an extension of the moral-religious relations of men as would transcend all social or national or racial barriers and bring person with person in true fellowship the world over. We may not share his bold conclusions, but we should recognize them. Without any reservations Tolstoy declares that beyond his relations as a Russian to other Russians and to foreigners is his deeper relation as a man to his fellowmen wherever found. He therefore rejects patriotism and nationalism as unworthy sentiments.

So Tolstoy's final attitude towards nationality and destiny in Russia is plain. For Russia as for himself he desires to see the day when all national-racial exclusiveness will be outgrown, when all international strife will cease, and along with it the conflict of social and economic classes. Break down all these walls and barriers that shut men off from each other. Open wide the doors and windows of common life, and let the sunlight of Christ shine upon a redeemed humanity!

It can be seen that Tolstoy goes beyond pacifism. What he advocates is a universal Christian life that wipes out all national and social-institutional structure. We may share Tolstoy's horror of the evils of international conflict and his earnest desire to cure it, but we may not accept his drastic remedies. Wars are indications of basic disorders in international relations. And just as a physician has to use poison-medicines to combat the poisons in the fevered body of his patient, so even a peaceful nation may in certain crises feel bound to wage war. But we know that after the war is ended a long régime of diet and daily care will be needed, and

manifold social-economic and political reforms, before the ailing nations can be restored to health and sanity. The crisis in modern life cannot be settled by a broadside injunction to wipe out all nationality. For despite the evils to which national arrogance and greed lead, national life has been also the nursery of fine spirit and feeling and achievement in human life. The less striking but saner project is this: how to organize and direct the national and international life of our time so as to overcome the fires of dissension and the plague of war, but at the same time to preserve the distinctive social gains and cultural values which develop normally in the sphere of national life.

IV

The last quarter-century has been epoch-making in Russian history, a turning-point not only in the destiny of Russia but of the whole modern world. In the development of Russian literature, however, this recent period can be described as mainly one of transition. The reader of Russian prose and verse produced under the hammer and sickle of Bolshevik rule may be overwhelmed by its boldness, intensity, and whirlpool sweep, but he misses the sovereign tones of immortal creative utterance. Against this estimate, occasional pages of great power may be cited, but they would scarcely suffice to meet the standard already set by Pushkin and Gogol, by Turgenev and Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. What Soviet writer can aspire to that august company?

This judgment is made quite objectively and need carry no sting of condemnation. Having made it, we may proceed to consider Soviet literature for what it is, and shall find it very significant in its own way, particularly as it concerns our topic. For no period of Russian literature has shown greater concentration on the course and destiny of the coun-

try. Indeed much of the present writing is and is meant to be propaganda: the literary campaign of the proletarian war. But these incendiary outbursts are even more ardent when they flame up, as if by spontaneous combustion, in souls long repressed and suddenly fanned to fiery speech.

These new poets of the communist dispensation are a multitude of the most various assortment. Here are erstwhile votaries of sundry aesthetic cults, caught in the midst of their chanting by the fury of the new proletarian mysteries, and either continuing to mumble to themselves or else strangely trying to sing the new hymns of revolt to their old tunes. Here are new rude bards, peasant or industrial hands that hold a clumsy but effective pen. The poems and tales of some of these men and women will be read in the future as the folklore of the social revolution. Here are poets and novelists of seasoned ability. Some of them had always fought in the proletarian ranks, in which they now sing their songs of victory. Their leader was Maxim Gorky. Others are new converts to the communist faith, with the eagerness but also the confusion of neophytes. Still others remain apart from the national struggle, unconvinced and uncertain. The Soviet government has been undecided in its literary policy. It has tried to corral the sheep and the goats together, to exact explicit submission if not active devotion and propagandist zeal from them all. Failing in this, it has given the more gifted but unbending goats in the flock some free range.

Altogether apart from all these have been the Russian writers who rejected and defied Bolshevism and continued their work abroad in exile. Their number includes some distinguished names, as Ivan Bunin, Dmitri Merezhkovsky. The latter in particular achieved world-renown by his novels portraying transitional crises in the history of civilization:

the clash of Christian and pagan strains at the close of classical antiquity, the amazing career of Leonardo da Vinci in the Renaissance, the Russian conflict of Oriental and Western ideas in the days of Peter the Great. Firm in his opposition to the Communist Revolution, Merezhkovsky advocates for Russia and for mankind a spiritual revival through a harmony of Christian and classical Greek ideals.

What visions of Russia and her destiny are revealed in the literature of Soviet Russia? Some of these poems and tales are loud with the tumult of battle, but in others some artistic judgment and serenity prevail. The attitude is very often one of ruthless and even jubilant disregard of the bloodshed and ruin of the social war. So we find it in the poem "Our March" by Vladimir Mayakovsky:

> Slog brute strength with rebel tramping!
> Higher, the crags of haughty heads!
> We will wash all the planets' cities
> In the surge of a second flood. . . .
>
> Drink to joy! Shout!
> Spring has flooded our blood.
> Heart, exult, beat!
> Our breasts are as crashing brass.

That institutional order, traditional family life should all be swept in the whirlpools of revolt, is taken as a matter of course by some of these wandering youth, children of the new deluge. But other poets seem aghast by the chaos they have unloosed over their country. Especially the rejection of religion, the laying waste of Christ's altars, horrifies some of the peasant poets. So sings, for instance, Piotr Oreshin:

> From every side upon holy Russia
> New beliefs, new snares are thrown.
> But never will the Russian peasant
> Lose his faith in God. . . .

Through the village with a knapsack Christ was walking
In white silvery garments.
Powerfully and loudly Christ was singing
Of the inconsolable peasant's sorrow.

The Soviet government, as is well known, in its resolution to emphasize and to spread the social-economic spirit of the communist revolution, subordinated the national Russian aspect of the new state. Even the name of Holy Russia was changed to U. S. S. R. But not so easily is the purely national devotion, love of native land, lost by a people. The name of Russia may not be in the government manifestoes, but it is on the lips of the people and in the poets' songs. So we read in the pages of Andrei Biely:

Elemental, in roar of thunders,
Rage madly, rage and consume me,
O Russia, my Russia, O Russia,
Messiah of days that will dawn!

When the Soviets faced their supreme crisis, and the people were asked to lay down their lives to check the treacherous Nazi invasion, once again the old words, "Mother Russia," rang over the boundless stretches with the thunder of guns and the clash of steel. Some students of present-day Russia believe that, in the amazing epic of the national struggle that is being written in blood from the Arctic Ocean to the Caucasus, a new national consciousness is also being achieved, and that Russia will emerge from this war transfigured and greater than in the past, and more resolved to assume her worthy and responsible rôle in the just and abiding reconstruction of the modern world.

We do not know what literary utterance this titanic struggle may yet yield. We do not hear the poets of Russia; only the daily war-communiqués. Yet who can doubt that in these tragic days, as in other days of conflict and dismay, Russian hearts are kept firm and resolute by the great words

of genius in which the nation's spiritual treasures have been preserved? As in an earlier day, so now a little prose-poem comes to mind, to sustain anguished souls in their faith in Russia. It is Turgenev's word of cheer and hope: "In days of doubt, in days of dreary meditation on my country's fate, thou alone art my stay and support, mighty, true, free Russian speech! But for thee, how not fall into despair, seeing all that is done at home? But who can think that such a language is not the gift of a great people!"

RADOSLAV ANDREA TSANOFF